



Department of Health and Human Services Aging and Disability Services

Area Agency on Aging 2006 Annual Report

Introduction:

The Montgomery County Area Agency on Aging is located in Aging and Disability Services in the Department of Health and Human Services. The Area Agency on Aging is responsible for developing and operating programs that ensure dignity, self determination and independent life styles and enhance the quality of life for Montgomery County's seniors and their families.

The Montgomery County Area Agency on Aging is part of a network of 900 area agencies on aging nationwide. Area agencies on Aging were established by the federal Older American Act of 1965 and based on the principle that older adults are entitled to spend their retirement years in good health, independence and dignity. Area agencies on aging also focus on the needs of caregivers of older adults, whose loving and selfless acts help make it possible for their older family members to remain in their own homes and community.

The Older Americans Act specifies that area agencies on aging will "...Foster the development and implementation of comprehensive and coordinated systems



A Senior and her Caregiver

to serve older individuals... and for the provision of supportive services in order to:

1. secure and maintain maximum independence and dignity in a home environment for older individuals capable of self-care with appropriate supportive services;
2. remove individual and social barriers to economic and personal independence for older individuals and
3. provide a continuum of care for vulnerable older individuals and secure the opportunity for older individuals to receive managed in-home and community-based long term care services.

The Montgomery County Area Agency on Aging performs these functions through the following programs.

Volume 1, Issue 1
March, 2007

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Information and Assistance (I&A) Program

The I&A Program provides one-stop information, assistance and outreach regarding services for seniors, their families, people with disabilities and families with children with disabilities. This program provides supports including information, referrals, advocacy and follow-up that allow people to do as much as possible for themselves prior to receiving services that allow them to remain independent.

I&A implemented a major customer service improvement in 2006. The 240-777-3000 line has been modified so that calls are now answered directly by staff instead of first receiving a recorded message.

Callers only receive the recording if all staff members are busy.

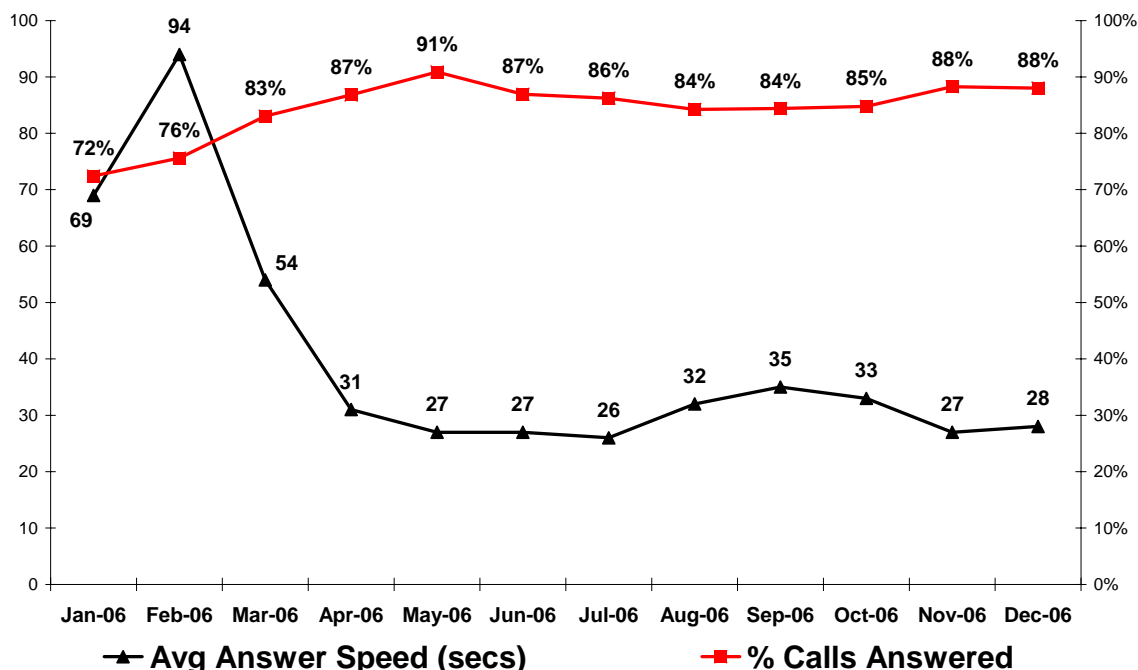
The recorded message is in English and Spanish. Callers can transfer directly to HHS Information and Referral (I&R) at 240-777-1245 (since our surveys have shown that as many as one-third of the calls to 240-777-3000 are for HHS services). Callers can also leave messages during office hours and receive a call back rather than stay on hold waiting for the next available staff person.

This and other changes have produced significant improvements in performance.



Information and Assistance

Jan - Dec, 2006



Senior Resource Guide

The Seniors' Resource Guides were translated into the following languages and delivered to I&A for distribution: 2200 Chinese, 1,100 Vietnamese, 1,070 Korean, 800 Russian, 250 French. Fifteen thousand English Guides were distributed.

Using a small grant from the Maryland Department of Aging, the AAA developed a brochure about the benefits of citizenship that targets refugees and asylees. The brochure has been translated into six refugee languages.



Medicare D/Prescription Assistance



The AAA received a large grant from the Maryland Department on Aging to perform outreach and enrollment for the Medicare D program. In December the AAA co-hosted a Medicare Prescription Drug Program Provider Fair with the Recreation Department, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid and the Social Security Administration at the Schweinhaut Senior Center. On December 6, 2006, the 28 page Aging and Disability Services Guide to Medicare Part D was distributed free to more than 250,000 County residents as an insert in the Montgomery Gazette. Assistance with paying for prescriptions, including co-payments and deductibles, is now available for persons with Medicare D.

Long Term Care Ombudsman

The Long Term Care Ombudsman provides resolution of complaints made in behalf of long term care residents; information to the public about the long term care system; and training to the staff of long term care on resident rights and elder abuse. It serves all resident living in the 35 nursing homes; 26 large assisted living facilities (17 and up); and 140 small group homes (under 16). This is total population of approximately 7,400 residents. Most service is provided by volunteer ombudsman who receive monthly training. There were 1,722 nursing home visits at a total of 5,707 hours and 833 assisted living visits at a total of 1,794 hours. Two hundred and fifty-one family councils were attended by ombudsman this fiscal year. Totals complaints received were 484. Resolution was 93%. The major complaint categories were discharge/eviction (133); accidents and injury of unknown origin (58); dignity, respect, and staff attitudes (37). Response time to begin investigation of a complaint is 1-2 days.



The Senior Health Promotion Program

The Senior Health Promotion Program collaborates with government and community partners to improve, expand and promote health and wellness opportunities for older adults that address physical, cognitive and emotional health factors vital for successful aging.

The Program partnered with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (R.S.V.P.) to bring free *Bone Builders* exercise classes to various County locations. Twenty potential volunteers were trained. There are currently four active classes serving approximately 48 older adults.

The Program partnered with Holy Cross Senior Source, Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRD) and the Hebrew Home of Greater Washington to train 25 older adults and 27 aging service professionals on cognitive functioning and ways to enhance it. This *Mind Alert* program was funded through a grant of Met Life and the American Society on Aging. It also partnered with MCRD to create and distribute *Staying Sharp*, a health marketing brochure that increases awareness of how to maintain cognitive health through leisure activities. Also with MCRD, it provided training on cognitive health to G.O.S.P.E.L. health promoters (who are supported by Public Health's health promotion program).

The Program convened and facilitated the *Montgomery County Coalition on End-of-Life Care* to help residents understand end-of-life choices and available resources. Over 20 individuals and representatives of organizations actively participate in this coalition.



Their first County-wide initiative is *Advance Directives Day*, scheduled for April 19, 2007.

The Program has partnering with interested civic associations to publish information on health issues vital to independent living including older driver safety; living safely at home; physical fitness; cognitive health; hoarding; and other topics.

The Program distributed tools to improve the health and safety of County seniors at the County Fair; Senior Beacon's InfoExpo; Top Banana's Home Delivered Resource Fair; during health talks; and through the Information and Assistance program. These tools included:

- 1,500 pill boxes to assist in medication management,
- 2,000 Files of Life to ensure Emergency Medical Technicians easy access to health information of residents,
- 750 pedometers and information on how to use them to increase physical fitness,
- 50 driver assessment tools to help seniors identify and address potential problem areas,
- 950 falls risk reminder cards,
- 2,500 night lights,
- distribution of health information to over 500 seniors relying on home delivered groceries.

Home and Community Based Waiver for Older Adults (MA Waiver)



Home and Community Based Waiver for Older Adults (MA Waiver) prevents nursing home placement for people 59 years old and older by providing case management and a multitude of community based services. The services may include:

- personal care,
- respite care,
- home delivered meals,
- assisted living services,
- senior center, plus

- family or consumer training,
- personal emergency response systems,
- dietitian,
- nutritionist services,
- assistive devices,
- environmental adaptations and assessments,
- behavioral consultation services.

Participation in the waiver also provides basic Medicaid coverage including physician and hospital services, prescriptions, medical day care, and durable and disposable medical equipment.

In 2006, 432 persons received an initial or ongoing assessment for Waiver services. 368 persons were approved and received ongoing Waiver services. Montgomery County recipients receive an average of \$38,000 per year in services paid for directly by Medicaid

Senior Nutrition Program

Senior Nutrition Program provides meals, nutrition education and nutrition counseling to seniors in Montgomery County.



Meals Provided	Type of Meals	Participants	Sites and Providers
2,867,675	congregate meals	4,774	36 sites, senior centers, etc.
141,000	home-delivered meals	683	9 Meals on Wheels providers

The Program initiated the Senior Nutrition Hotline in February 1, 2006. Every Wednesday, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., a registered dietitian responds to questions about diet and nutrition. Fifty-two calls were answered during 2006.

SERVICE UNITS



The Family Caregiver Support Program provides information and assistance to family caregivers. Eligible clients are caregivers of older adults, and seniors caring for a grandchild. The program provides information and help accessing services to caregivers such as education and training events and publications, support groups, temporary care for a loved one in or out of the home, and other supportive services. The Program provides in-home personal care aides on an ongoing basis. This includes assistance with tasks like bathing, dressing, feeding and other basic needs. In 2006 the Program added respite care on a short-term, periodic basis, including care for a loved one outside the home, for up to 164 hours per year.

The Senior Group Home Subsidy program pays a portion of the cost for clients to live in licensed assisted living facility of 16 beds or less. Adults age 62 and older who meet financial and physical requirements and have a history of residency in the County are eligible. This program is intended to help clients remain in community settings as they age, and to delay or prevent them from entering nursing homes. The program provided support to 83 clients in County fiscal year 2006. Six clients or 7% left the program to receive institutional care. Clients in this program are 85 years old on average and stay in the program for almost three years.



Senior Busses The Area Agency on Aging uses County Ride-On busses during off-peak hours to transport seniors to County recreation and senior centers to participate in the AAA's Senior Nutrition Program lunches and other senior programs. These busses also take seniors to grocery stores. Service is limited, but in 2006 the program provided over 38,000 grocery shopping.

The Senior Health Insurance Counseling program (SHIP) uses trained volunteers to provide counseling to help seniors and their caregivers make better choices about their health insurance options and benefits, make sense of their medical bills and insurance statements, and understand their rights as consumers of health insurance products. The University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service manages this. The program served over 4,100 people in 2006.

Interages provides technical assistance to agencies, schools and businesses on how to operate programs involving children and older adults. It also conducts intergenerational programs within the school and community. Interages served more than 600 youth and 160 seniors through its programs in county fiscal year 2006, and involved more than 200 senior volunteers.

The **Internal Light** program, operated by the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, provides education about low-vision resources and training in the skills needed to live independently to vision impaired seniors living in upper Montgomery County. The program provides transportation to regular meetings, which are not only educational but also serve as opportunities for socialization, mutual support and confidence building.

The Senior Employment Aides program provides job skill training, career counseling and job placement assistance to adults age 55 and older. The program subsidizes participant wages for limited time while helping them find permanent employment. The program served 140 people in County fiscal year 2006, and helped 23 people find permanent jobs.



The Legal Services for Seniors program provides free legal representation and consultation to senior citizens. The service is provided for the County by the Legal Aid Bureau, which focuses its assistance on issues related to Social Security, Medicare and other benefits, evictions, housing and nursing home issues. The program provided over 1,100 hours of free legal services last year to 177 clients.

The Senior Connection

The Senior Connection is an interfaith caregiving program that uses volunteers to provide escorted transportation, shopping and errand assistance, visits and phone calls to homebound people, and help with reading, writing, and completing medical forms. The program provided more than 2,300 escorted trips to medical appointments and other errands in County fiscal year 2006, and had active partnerships with more than 50 County congregations.

Food and Friends prepares and delivers daily meals or weekly groceries to individuals with chronic and debilitating illnesses. In addition, the program provides nutritional counseling and features menus designed to combat symptoms and side effects common



to individuals with such illnesses. Food and Friends delivered over 38,500 meals and 17,800 grocery bags to clients and their dependent family members in county fiscal year 2006.

Friendly Visitor Program volunteers make weekly visits to adults who are isolated and lonely due to physical problems that confine them to their homes. These visits help increase the clients' sense of connection to the community, relieve loneliness and also provide a way to monitor their health. 139 isolated seniors had volunteer visitors in county fiscal year 2006. The program is operated for the County by the Mental Health Association of Montgomery County.



The Representative Payee Program operated by contract with the Mental Health Association, provides financial supervision for Montgomery County adults who receive a government benefit such as Social Security that they are unable to manage because of a physical or mental disability. Program clients are matched with a trained volunteer who manages the monthly benefit for the client. Over 100 people received this assistance in County fiscal year 2006.



The Grocery Shopping for Seniors Program, operated by contract with the Red Cross, provides grocery shopping and delivery, and escorted grocery shopping for people aged 60 and older. The program made over 6,300 trips on behalf of 250 clients in fiscal year 2006.

Caring for Individuals with Dementia In county fiscal year 2006 the County funded the development of workshops to train and educate caregivers of people with dementia. The Alzheimer Association developed the program. The goal is to help reduce the burden experienced by these caregivers, leading to improvements in overall quality of life, and reducing the risk of premature institutionalization of those persons with dementia. 89 people participated in the workshops, which will be offered again in the County and other jurisdictions.

Awards and Achievements



Aging Achievement Award-National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

The Something For Everyone Program, part of the Senior Nutrition Program has been honored with an Aging Achievement Award by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a).

The 2006 n4a Aging Achievement Award recognizes aging programs from across the country that provide successful, cost-effective approaches to assist older adults live independently in their homes as well as provide support to the caregivers of older adults. The Senior Nutrition Program contracts with six ethnic organizations to provide nutrition services including ethnic meals targeted to Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese seniors and seniors who desire Kosher meals (who are mainly Russian). Something for Everyone began in 1990 and has expanded to include 16 sites that served 49,019 meals to about 2,800 seniors in 2006.

National Association of Counties

Something for Everyone also won the National Association of Counties Organization (NACO) Best of Health and Human Services Category award. This award recognizes innovative local programs. It is only the third Best of Category award won by Montgomery County

Silver Spring Senior Source

The Silver Spring Senior Source is a non-traditional senior center located in Elizabeth House, a 160 unit HUD 202 elderly building in downtown Silver Spring owned by the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC). The Senior Source has a unique focus on Health and wellness activities. HOC provides the space rent-free. Montgomery County obtained a Maryland Department of Aging grant of \$520,000 and provided \$520,000 in county funds for renovation. The County provides \$10,000 for utilities. Holy Cross Hospital operates the Senior Source and assumes all other costs of staffing and operation. This partnership provides a senior center at almost no ongoing taxpayer cost.

North American Mature Publishers Association

Long Term Care Ombudsman. The "Ask the Ombudsman" column in the Senior Beacon newspaper won first place in the 2006 North American Mature Publishers Association competition. The Montgomery County Long Term Care Ombudsman Program initiated and helps to write this column along with the Ombudsman programs of other metro DC area jurisdictions. Questions about nursing homes, assisted living and related issues are answered by these experts.